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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

EXCISE F19

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February 13, 1974

To: The Secretary

From: INR - William G. Hyland

A New Cultural Revolution in China?

Summary

In analyzing the developing "rectification" campaign in China, there are two obvious questions: (1) What are the implications for domestic politics, and (2) will it lead to significant shifts in foreign policy?

The Current Campaign

In certain respects the current campaign recalls the Cultural Revolution:

- Its defense of the tactics and social innovations of the Cultural Revolution;
- The increasing militancy of its rhetoric;
- The widespread appearance of wall posters, a medium employed by Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution.

But it also resembles other less world-shaking campaigns that have been a periodic feature of the continuing Chinese revolution. Significant differences from the Cultural Revolution are:

- The strict control being exercised by the party;
- The non-emergence of extra-establishment institutions;

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- The seemingly planned and disciplined way in which it is proceeding.

#### About the Targets

To date, modes of behavior rather than individuals have been under attack; and it is likely that low level power-holders will eventually be identified as targets, and purged. At the same time we believe that the center will also be seriously affected. Our tentative conclusion is that, internally, the "left" is again in the ascendant and that Chou--although he seems to be acting with his customary dexterity--may suffer some loss in stature and authority.

#### On Current Foreign Policy

The heightened rhetoric on some, but far from all, areas of PRC foreign policy has not yet affected substance:

- We see a number of significant areas in which rhetoric has not heightened--Korea, Indochina;
- We see the persistence of pragmatic behavior in on-going contacts and negotiations with Japan and Malaysia and even in routine contacts with the USSR.

#### The US and the Future

The current rise in China's political temperature does not seem likely to set back rapprochement with us although we should be wary of decisive judgments this early in a major internal campaign:

- We note that the rationale behind the opening to the West--the Soviet threat, the need for access to modern technology--retains its validity and is reinforced by now-established patterns of expanded international trade and diplomatic relations.
- We note not only the almost complete absence of evidence associating the left

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with opposition to the improvement of relations with the US, but also some conspicuous identification by leftist leaders with approval of the US policy.

- At the same time, if the internal campaign should spin out of control or Chou En-lai be seriously weakened, the question of whether foreign policy could be preserved intact will be increasingly before us.

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### I. Internal Implications

The most intense political campaign since the Cultural Revolution (1966-69) is now underway. A major editorial published February 2 in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) organ People's Daily formally launched a new stage of the campaign "to criticize Confucius and criticize Lin Biao." Invoking Chairman Mao as the campaign's initiator and leader, the editorial called for a "mass political struggle" to "test every leading comrade" in the Party. In response to this call--and earlier, more explicit party guidance--party committees throughout China have organized mass rallies, distributed literature, sponsored study sessions, and begun to train movement activists. Early reports indicate that the campaign is pervasive, extending down to basic units in city and countryside and touching all strata of the population.

Is the Campaign a "New Cultural Revolution"? The Cultural Revolution started as Mao's assault on the entrenched party-government establishment. Increasingly relegated to the role of respected but impotent elder statesman, Mao sought to reassert his own primacy and to restore allegiance to an eroding revolutionary ethic. To achieve this, Mao and his supporters set up new extra-establishment institutions--most notably the student Red Guards--and unleashed them, frequently armed and assisted by the regular army, against the opposition. But, because he lacked institutional control over the Red Guard organizations, Mao found himself powerless to prevent excesses, confronted with anarchy, and ultimately compelled to call upon the army to restore order.

Observers in Peking and Hong Kong have noted disquieting parallels between the current campaign and the early days of the Cultural Revolution. Defense of the tactics and revolutionary social innovations of the Cultural Revolution has been prominent in the PRC media since last August; big-character wallposters, a main tool of the Red Guards, are now appearing in factories, schools, restaurants, and construction sites, though they only condemn the official targets, Lin Biao and Confucius; and, most ominous of all, the militant rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution has suddenly been resurrected. In February, the Party's theoretical journal, Red Flag,

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signalled tolerance for excesses by quoting Mao's famous dictum "a revolution is not a dinner party," and the press has revived the Cultural Revolution slogan "beat the rat crossing the street" (used to exhort persons to identify and attack "class enemies").

Nevertheless, the current campaign thus far resembles more closely the political campaigns waged cyclically in China since 1949 than the aberrant Cultural Revolution.

- Mao appears to be in firm command of the party apparatus. All signs point to strict party control over the campaign, to the emergence of no rival institutions capable of pursuing independent objectives and tactics, and to no unpremeditated violence. (Political campaigns in China, and particularly intense ones, have often entailed violence carefully channeled against specified targets, and there is no reason to suppose that this campaign will differ.)
- The evidence indicates that the campaign was planned at least six months ago, that it is progressing in graduated stages according to a precalculated scenario, and that the present mobilization phase, timed as usual to coincide with the post-lunar New Year slack season, will dominate domestic activities in China for many weeks to come.

Whither the Campaign? If the campaign follows past precedents the crescendo is likely to be reached several months from now, when individual personalities will be identified and purged. At a minimum such targets will include local leaders. This is foreshadowed in the current elevation to national prominence of local exemplars of the rejection of the easy, material, non-revolutionary way. The next step will be to identify, criticize, publicize, and perhaps physically abuse "negative examples"--those who have traded unfairly on personal and family relationships for private advantage, abused their official positions in a corrupt way, or spoken out at one time or another against the Cultural Revolution and its policies.

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Thus far, official guidance to provincial cadre and explanations to foreign diplomats and journalists have described the campaign as designed to root out the vestiges of the old and reversion to pre-Cultural Revolution behavior patterns, and have emphasized that it will not be directed against particular leaders, either at the central or provincial level.

Nevertheless, our guess is that the campaign will move ahead inexorably until it touches the central leadership in Peking. This seems indicated by its intensity, by apparently extended debate in the last 6-8 months over domestic policy, by the inordinately vituperative language directed against Confucius and the deceased Defence Minister Lin Biao, and by the heavy play given to learned articles on historical themes whose protagonists often seem analogous to contemporary leaders. [

the Chinese themselves increasingly anticipate this denouement but seem as perplexed as we are about the identity of the target or targets, with almost every active leader of Politburo rank save Mao himself the object of speculation.

B.I.A.S

The Position of Chou En-Lai. Most intelligence community observers see Premier Chou En-lai and Politburo member Chiang Ch'ing (Madame Mao Tse-tung) as principal opponents in the unfolding drama, even though they may not be mortal antagonists bent on each other's removal from office. Chiang, who rose to prominence during the Cultural Revolution, is generally considered the foremost defender of its programs and the champion of unyielding "leftism" and the ethic of struggle. Chou, despite his impeccable record of service to the Communist revolution in China and to Mao Tse-tung personally, has come to be identified as the pragmatic antithesis of the party ideologue, willing to bend orthodoxy to safeguard more vital interests, and inclined by temperament and talent to negotiation and compromise.

Since Chiang is so exclusively identified with the Cultural Revolution and Chou with the rebuilding process and the policies that followed it (though this disregards Chou's active role in the Cultural Revolution), one can plausibly assume disagreement between them on a host of domestic policy issues. This is particularly true of several issues thought to have been recently under

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debate--the rehabilitation of party leaders purged during the Cultural Revolution, the correct treatment of intellectuals, university admission and courses of study, post-graduation assignments of students to the countryside, the types of materials to be made available in the cultural sphere, and the role of technological specialization in modernizing China. In debate over the remaining major domestic issue--the proper role of the army in party and governmental affairs--there is no clear-cut hypothesis as to possible differences between "leftists" and "pragmatists."

The "correct" position on these issues was signalled by the anti-Confucius articles and editorials which began to appear last August and which reaffirmed the Cultural Revolution and its products in a series of unmistakable historical analogies. The move to reduce the position of entrenched regional military strongmen was clearly foreshadowed in articles applauding the centralizing efforts of the first Ch'in emperor (universally read by Chinese to be Mao). But the anti-Confucius literature left uncertain in a haze of conflicting allusion whether other heroes and villains, "progressives" and "reactionaries" of antiquity, were intended to be read merely as types or to be identified with particular current leaders.

Intelligence community analysts see at least three possible scenarios in the current campaign to criticize Confucius and Lin Piao.

- (1) Chou En-lai and his allies have either initiated or seized control of the campaign, have coopted the arguments of the left, have increasingly isolated their adversaries, and have laid the groundwork for the eventual purge of Chiang Ch'ing and/or her supporters.
- (2) The major issue remains the relationship between army and party, and while a cleavage along "left"- "pragmatist" lines persists, the current campaign is intended by a central civilian coalition to reduce further the power of ranking military leaders.
- (3) Intensification of the campaign signifies that the "left" is ascendant, that China

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is entering another "leftist" phase in domestic policy, and that Chou En-lai's personal stature and authority will accordingly be reduced.

As interpretation of the PRC media and intuition are virtually the only available resources, no serious analyst would assert that one view is correct and the others logically indefensible. If pressed for a judgment, however, we would associate ourselves with the third school of thought, i.e., the "left" in the ascendant. In so doing we would cite, inter alia, the following evidence:

- Although the CCP 10th Party Congress (August 24-28, 1973) affirmed Chou's position as number-two leader after Mao and somewhat reduced Chiang Ch'ing's formal standing, it also represented a perceptible shift to the "left"--at least in rhetoric--in both foreign and domestic policy.
- As Premier of the State Council, Chou is presumably in direct charge of preparations for the long-awaited 4th National People's Congress (NPC), the state's highest policy-ratifying body. Despite Chou's announcement at the 10th Party Congress that the NPC would convene "soon" and his observation in mid-October that it was "imminent," it now appears that preparatory work is bogged down. This suggests, at a minimum, that Chou's control over the flow of events has proved less than he had anticipated. B.T.A.3
- As the anti-Confucius campaign was stepped up in January and early February, the PRC media enthused over China's revolutionary music and operas in the course of biting attacks on Western music and on a film documentary by Italian director Antonioni. Chiang Ch'ing has been directly responsible for the new revolutionary operas while Chou En-lai's approval was presumably

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required for the visits by Western orchestras and Antonioni.

- Although the anti-Confucius articles may still be read as attacks on anyone or no one at all, both the overall thrust and the implied analogies increasingly seem to land closer to Chou's door than to Chiang's. To cite one recent example, it is charged that Confucius "assigned several of his disciples ... to serve as grassroots officials or envoys to foreign states in an attempt to gain complete control of the Lu government."
- The recent Red Flag condemnation of the Confucian "Golden Mean" and justification for disruptions of order seem alien and inimical to Chou's style of leadership.

## II. Foreign Relations

The present campaign has included attacks on a bizarre conglomeration of Beethoven, the Italian film-maker, Antonioni, Jonathan Livingston Seagull, and Owen Lattimore. Such attacks--taken together with the internal campaign, the January Paracels mini-blitzkrieg, and Peking's publicized expulsion of the Soviet diplomats--raise the larger question of whether the foreign policies associated with Chou En-lai, particularly the American connection, are under assault and will be reversed.

There is certainly no sign of this as yet. The attacks on Beethoven et al. seem to be offshoots of a dimly seen domestic political dynamic rather than considered formulations of Chinese relations with the rest of the world. Even though the assortment of targets could be identified with the West and the US, the attacks can be read with equal plausibility as warnings to Chinese against the corrupt outer world.

Rhetoric has heightened in some fields--notably with respect to the USSR--but in others, of strong PRC interest, it has not. For example, People's Daily in its January 27

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treatment of the first anniversary of the Paris signings was relatively restrained and, consistent with the past year's practice, treated the US role in Vietnam lightly. Similarly, Peking has created relatively little commotion over Park's internal troubles or the ROK-held islands off the North Korean coast; moreover, the Antonioni diatribe included explicit re-endorsement of "Chairman Mao's revolutionary line in foreign affairs," the code phrase for the detente with the US.

There have as yet been no significant signs of change in matters of some substance involving developing relations. At the UN in the fall, the PRC seemed anxious to show itself to be constructive and accommodating on the Korean question.

- In negotiations with Malaysia concerning diplomatic relations the Chinese have been conciliatory, while less structured contacts with the Thai also seem to be proceeding in the "spirit of Bandung."
- In early January, Foreign Minister Ohira visited Peking, signed a Sino-Japanese trade agreement, and apparently also won approval for a Japanese-devised solution to the GRC/PRC airlines problem, which fell well short of Peking's original demands.
- In recent weeks non-stop Moscow-Peking air service has been instituted, and the yearly Sino-Soviet border river navigation talks routinely conducted.
- Finally, the Chinese justified their Paracels operation in defensive terms, released the captured American and the first group of Vietnamese quickly and quietly, and show no signs of moving on to the Spratlys--in part, according to clandestine reports, because of their desire to avoid confronting ROC forces there.

The absence of significant substantive foreign policy change in the six months since the beginning of the anti-

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Confucian campaign does not eliminate the possibility of change to come. We know extremely little about what happens in the PRC leadership; analysts failed to foresee such major events as the Cultural Revolution and the fall of Lin Biao. Moreover, the small group of people who today govern China, riven and scarred by the upheavals they have so recently passed through, may be driven into further internecine battles even while recognizing the risks to China's stability and security. We have no evidence linking the left to opposition to detente policies, but we would not rule out that certain Chinese leadership elements, striving for ascendancy, might find it useful--whether in terms of domestic political infighting or of a genuinely different interpretation of China's national interests--to force a change in PRC foreign policies.

In reaching the estimate that a change in policy is unlikely, we have nothing on which to base our case except the logical--and perhaps, therefore, somewhat dangerous--expectation that pursuit of enlightened self-interest, having proved highly profitable, will not be quickly abandoned. Existing policy has contributed to a large reduction in the US presence in Asia, has limited increase in Soviet influence, and increased the international isolation of Taiwan, all at low cost to Peking. The progression, moreover, has not yet been carried as far as it could reasonably be expected to go; the patterns in relations with Japan and Southeast Asia noted above are part of an on-going process in which each step implies the next.

The twin practical rationales for Chou En-lai's opening to the non-Communist world--the Soviet threat, and access to Western technology--remain as valid as ever.

However, conscious though the Chinese leaders may be of benefits from relaxed tensions, it would be highly difficult for any faction among them to cut through the decades of hostility toward and mistrust of the USSR--to which Mao's personal animus has contributed--and make even a significant move toward the Soviets. We know of no Peking figure or group who might favor such a gesture. If the Soviets withdrew some military units from the northern border area, a move which the Chinese for years have insisted must be a prerequisite to meaningful border talks, tentative possibilities might open--but Moscow has

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never shown any inclination to make such a unilateral concession.

On the other hand, the Washington-Moscow detente has also complicated the problem of rationalizing the Washington-Peking relationship. The Brezhnev-Nixon meeting of June 1973 may have led China's leaders to ponder where the triangular USSR-US-PRC relationship was heading, and to consider what the nature of the Sino-US relation should be. By August, Chou En-lai at the 10th Party Congress was justifying Sino-US detente in distinctly left-handed and tactical terms, declaring that helping a bandit was not such a bad thing if your purpose was to keep the damage down rather than to share in the loot.

[At about the same time, US exchange groups which had tentatively arranged visits to the PRC began to run into snags, and although the Philadelphia Orchestra's fall visit went off successfully, the negotiations on 1974 exchanges carried out in conjunction with the Secretary's November visit to Peking resulted in a schedule no fuller than in 1973, despite the fact that the exchange program had earlier been envisaged on both sides as one that should progressively expand. Progress in arranging the scheduled 1974 exchanges has been minimal to date, and exchange programs conducted by other Western countries are also encountering difficulties. The connection with the attacks on the "cultural aggression" committed by Antonioni et al. is clear. Other Sino-US negotiations, on claims and assets frozen since the 1940's, have not progressed, but the lack of publicity on this question suggests that the problems are of a technical or bargaining nature and have no wider ramifications.]

B. J. A. 5

One area of Sino-US interaction which is more than atmospheric is trade. Were Peking to start cutting off its technological nose for the sake of its ideological face we would have real cause to fear that the Chinese political process was again slipping out of control. To date there is no sign that this is happening: Sino-US trade, which reached a 1973 volume of \$800 million, continues to flourish, and while the Chinese display moderate concern at the severe imbalance between imports and exports, they continue to contact US businessmen assiduously.

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In sum, there is little present evidence to warrant a conclusion that Sino-American relations will be jeopardized by the internal anti-Confucian campaign. There is speculative evidence that Chou may come under pressure, however, and if the domestic situation should spin out of control we will increasingly face the question of whether current Chinese foreign policies can be preserved intact.

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